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ABSTRACT

Student self-concept represents a newly emerging and extremely important field of study for instructors and classroom facilitators. This paper presents studies and theories investigating self-concept as a significant factor in the classroom. Self-concept is deeply imbedded in intrapersonal, perception, and interpersonal communication. In order to investigate self-concept, the paper first looks at the classroom from a systems theory perspective. It then proceeds to investigate intrapersonal communication, its significance in the classroom, and its link to self-concept theory. This leads into a discussion of perception and interpersonal communication between instructor and student. The paper investigates self-concept theory, recognizes its positive significance when applied to the instructional setting, and offers practical applications to aid instructors in concentrating on student self-concept as a way of motivating and increasing student learning. (Contains 22 references.) (Author/CR)

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Communication Techniques and their Effects on Self-Concept in the Classroom

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Abstract

Student self-concept represents a newly emerging and extremely important field of study for instructors and classroom facilitators. This paper presents studies and theories investigating self-concept as a significant factor in the classroom. It is deeply imbedded in intrapersonal, perception, and interpersonal communication. In order to investigate self-concept, the authors first look at the classroom from a systems theory perspective. They then proceed to investigate intrapersonal communication, its significance in the classroom, and its link to self-concept theory. This leads into a discusson of perception and interpersonal communication between instructor and student. The authors investigate self-concept theory, recognize its positive significance when applied to the instructional setting, and offer practical applications to aid instructors in concentrating on student self-concept as a way of motivating and increasing student learning.

Student self-concept represents a newly emerging and extremely important field of study for instructors and classroom facilitators. This paper presents studies and theories investigating self-concept as a significant factor in the classroom. It is deeply imbedded in intrapersonal, perception, and interpersonal communication. In order to investigate self-concept further, we must first look at student-teacher communication behavior in the classroom. We will start by introducing the classroom from a systems theory perspective.

According to Littlejohn, system consists of objects, attributes, internal relationships, and environment (Littlejohn 41). Within a system, the whole is greater than its parts, a hierarchy is established, and the system seeks to attain a goal and will re-adjust its balance to reach that goal.

In keeping with our understanding of a system, we suggest that the instructional classroom can be approached from a systems theory perspective. From this perspective, the students and instructor represent the individual units. The dynamics (or lack thereof) of the classroom act as the system's attributes. This includes whatever enthusiasm, boredom, interest, pressure, confusion, or clarity which the classroom "system" and its units exude. The interaction of teacher with students, and students with students, represent the internal relationships, interdependence, and constraint within the system. For example, the teacher relies on the students to be present and react -- either positively or negatively -- to his or her method of teaching; the students rely on the teacher for instruction, evaluation, discipline, and support; the students rely on other students for socialization, support, and unity. Finally, subject matter, grade level, class size, and class attitude serve as the environment in a given classroom.

The goal in a classroom can be a variety of things: increased cognitive ability, the attainment of a certain skill, socialization, or improved behavior, to name a few. Furthermore,

depending on the perspective, the goal can be more specific. A student's goal in a classroom, for example, could be the attainment of an A, a degree, knowledge, entrance to college, a career. From the instructor's perspective, a goal could be transferring valuable information to students, improving student's behavior, testing and evaluating students, the paycheck every two weeks, or exercising control over the students in the class.

In whatever scenario, if a common goal (or a number of common goals) is agreed upon between students and teacher, a successful system can be formed where students and teacher work together to attain that goal. Hence, the units are interrelated, interdependent, and the whole becomes greater than its parts.

Within a system, there are a variety of subsystems at work. One of these subsystems which we would like to address further is student self-concept. Individual self-concept is important in any interpersonal and intrapersonal communication event because self-perceptions and attitudes towards oneself and fellow members of the classroom effect individual behavior and can positively or negatively effect learning ability and retention. We will examine self-concept theory, perception, intrapersonal approaches, and relational theories to determine how self-concept affects learning.

Intrapersonal communication plays a role in the development of self-concept. In order to understand that role, we present an operational definition of intrapersonal communication. Blaine Goss has developed a model for intrapersonal communication. This model consists of four parts: human information processing, cognitive components, affective components, and operational components. He believes this model illustrates all of the fundamental processes necessary to understand intrapersonal communication. Goss states, "human information processing is the

ability to gather, store and retrieve information. This is the crux of intrapersonal communication" (Goss 4).

It is important to note that during human information processing (HIP) we continually receive both internal and external information. "People, events and objects are sources for external information. Knowledge, past experiences, meanings and feelings make up your internal world of information" (Goss 5). Successful information processing requires the blending of both types of information we receive. In this way, information processing is a function of combining intrapersonal and interpersonal communication skills. So, how do we process the information from these sources?

Let's look at the process of how the brain works in this communication process. "The basic information processing goes like this. To be understood, information needs to be received by a receptor and analyzed by an interpreter. Your eyes and ears serve as the main receptors in communication. Your brain is the main interpreter. Without the ears and eyes, the brain would not have sounds and sights to interpret. Without the brain, the neurological impulses sent by the ears and eyes would go unnoticed. The receptors transmit the data. The interpreter figures out what the data mean. The receptors and the interpreter work together so you can make sense out of your world" (Goss 13). These processes make up the basic human information processing.

"Surrounding HIP are three components, each with two parts. The cognitive component consists of your meaning and language. The affective component consists of your attitudes and self-concept. The operational component refers to your listening and speaking skills" (Goss 4).

In order to effectively describe intrapersonal communication, we will briefly discuss each of these components, ending with the affective component. Through the discussion of

intrapersonal communication it will be shown that self-concepts are formed through the internal processing of external stimuli.

The cognitive component of HIP includes meaning and language. Meanings are internal information based on perception. They remain inside our heads when we communicate ideas. Associations between concepts provide glue for our semantic memory, and meaning is built upon these associations. Therefore, our past experiences and self-perception play a large part in determining meaning because meanings are just bundles of experiences and the attitudes we have about them. Language, on the other hand, is the structure by which we communicate. Goss states that the core of communication behavior is language. In fact, "as you become more proficient in using your language and building your meanings, you can process more information more quickly and more thoroughly" (Goss 63).

The operational component refers to listening and speaking skills. Listening is the interpretation of sounds. We as communicators selectively choose the sounds in which we are interested in interpreting. Listening, then, is a processing of filtering and "organizing [information] into verbal units that you can apply meaning to" (Goss 97). By definition, "a conversation is a sequence of paraphrased ideas that is brought about by interaction" (Goss 103). Therefore, speaking is the act of putting together facts and inferences to communicate a meaningful whole idea that the listener can understand.

The affective component consists of attitudes and self-concept. The affective component colors how you deal with information. Goss explains that attitudes are a result of your values and beliefs, and that self-concept is your perception of your attitudes as valuable or non-valuable. In Goss's words, "self-concept is your attitude about you" (Goss 72). With this brief overview of

intrapersonal communication in Goss's terms, we are now able to see how self-concept, in part, belongs in the domain of the intrapersonal.

As Goss mentions, perception and the development of self-perception is an integral part of the formation of self-concept. Perception as a term has been very difficult to define through the years. The word originally comes from psychophysics, and indicates that "when a given energy level surpasses the appropriate sensory mechanism's threshold, the individual becomes aware of the energy emission" (Lake 1). Scholars have, in the years following, either avoided the term perception because of its vague and uncertain definition, or rejected the definition completely. New definitions have been suggested and bodies of research based on these manipulated definitions have emerged as valid and educational documents. For this paper, dealing with perception in the classroom, the definition that will most serve our needs is as follows. Renato Tagiuri suggests, "We propose using the term person perception whenever the perceiver regards the object as having the potential of representation and intentionality...we refer mostly to observations we make about intentions, attitudes, emotions, ideas, abilities, purposes, traits -- events that are, so to speak, inside the person" (Lake 2). Perception in this sense, then, is what goes on inside a person's head that determines how he or she will react to the communication event. This has very little to do with what is said, but instead, perception is a gauge of how things are interpreted.

C.E. Osgood presents an even more detailed definition of perception which can be used in the quest to identify its influence in classroom interaction. He says, "perception involves the organization of information about persons and the attribution of properties to them, often on the basis of only sketchy cues. These properties manifest constancy, in spite of observed variation, and are selectively attributed in the sense that they are influenced by the perceiver's psychological

states. The processes by which information is organized are flexible, the same body of information is subject to patterning in different ways" (Lake 2). Osgood touches on quite a few points in his definition. Three important things he says about perception is that it is based only on sketchy cues, it is flexible, and it is selective.

The fact that perception is based on sketchy cues indicates that whatever prior knowledge one has about a person or oneself, coupled with the adherence to or departure from the original person's values or attitudes, can make up a perception of the other person or oneself which doesn't necessarily include all the information possible. For example, a student may feel academically inadequate because of prior failures in school even though he or she is very intelligent. Or a teacher may perceive a student to be a low achiever based on his or her original assumptions about the student even though the student does acceptable work.

The second aspect Osgood mentions in his definition of perception is that it is a flexible tool. This is an important characteristic of perception because it indicates that perceptual "biases" can be changed given more information and personal experience. The flexibility of perceptions provide the atmosphere within which the classroom operates. Furthermore, these perceptions enable students and teachers to decide to change their perceptions of self or others as their information increases.

In the same way, perception is selective. Wallace D. LaBenne and Bert I. Greene say, "One of the most revealing aspects of perception is that it is a selective process ... The choices made relate to one's past experiences and present needs and current self-conceptions ... The concept one has of oneself expands or limits the richness and variety of the perception one selects" (LaBenne 18). Hence, selectivity is personal, based on personal need and personal view point. In this way, perception can be a dangerous and distorting vehicle of viewing, and deserves

attention in studying the classroom as a system. Theorists have agreed that selective perception is a cornerstone in the development and maintenance of self-concept. Hamachek states, "the single most powerful mechanism for the protection and enhancement of self-concept is selective perception" (Hamachek 335).

Self-concept is also influenced by communication with others. Classroom interaction is most obviously a form of interpersonal communication. Within this framework, those involved in the communication are charged with making use of signs and symbols they receive from other communicators and interpreting them into their perception of themselves. Tagiuri states that "understanding of an interpersonal relationship depends upon the availability of information regarding two of its aspects: the first of these is the nature of the response of each person to the other. The second aspect consists of the perception that each person has of the other person's response toward him" (Hare 217).

A relational perspective closely related to these ideas is R.D. Laing's thesis that a "person's communicative behavior is largely shaped by his or her perception of the relationship with the other communicator" (Littlejohn 263). In interpersonal communication, Laing recognizes two processes the communicator encounters. These are experience and behavior. He states that behavior is public and observable. This communicative behavior is what one observes the interactant or oneself doing. Laing states that "experience is the feeling that accompanies behavior or the perception of another's behavior. It consists of imagination, perception, and memory" (Littlejohn 263). Therefore, experience is the intra-processing of the communication, whereas behavior is the inter-processing of the event.

Laing emphasizes that in the process of communication, interactants encounter two levels of experience or perception, called perspectives. Direct perspectives involve observing and

interpreting another's behavior. These perspectives are the observable, public behaviors exhibited and interpreted by the communicator. Meta perspectives involve "imagining or inferring what the other person is feeling, perceiving, or thinking" (Littlejohn 263). Though these meta perspectives are an unconscious and frequent occurrence in every day life, we must remember that they are indeed only inferences, and we cannot ever be positive what another's attitudes or perceptions may be. These attitudes and perceptions of others are very important in the classroom environment, so it would behoove us to investigate how attitudes are established.

Blaine Goss says that "your internalized feelings about a topic are called your values, attitudes and beliefs" (Goss 70). He believes that values, attitudes and beliefs all work together to make up the affective component of ourselves that he calls attitudes. Attitudes are defined as "your predisposition to respond positively or negatively to ideas, people, or objects" (Goss 70). Our attitudes determine how much we like or dislike something, believe in or not believe in something, or think something is good or bad. According to Goss, opinions are just verbalized attitudes. Whether these attitudes can be changed will depend on how strongly held they are. An attitude that is weak will be easier to change than one that is held very strongly.

Goss's concept of attitudes is similar to the Information-Integration Theory. In this theory attitudes are defined as "predispositions to act in a positive or negative way toward a system" (Littlejohn 147). This theory takes Goss's discussion of attitudes one step further by postulating the idea that an individual's attitude system can be affected by information that is received and integrated. However, the degree to which it will affect the attitude depends not just on how it relates to the currently held attitude or how strongly held the attitude is, but will depend on two factors. These factors are labeled valence and weight.

Valence describes the degree to which the new information is perceived as good or bad news. If the new information supports existing attitudes in the person, information will be integrated and viewed as positive. If the new information does not support existing attitudes in the person, information may still be integrated but will be perceived as negative. Valence affects how information influences attitudes.

The second factor is weight. Weight describes the perceived importance of the new information. This perception will be based on whether an individual thinks the information is probably true, or the amount of credibility the new information carries. Weight affects the degree to which the new information will influence attitudes. Therefore, if a teacher who is highly respected pays a student a compliment, that student's attitude about him or herself is likely to be positively affected. However, a teacher who has not secured his or her students' friendship or respect can compliment the same student and that student's attitude may remain unchanged.

It is important to understand the connection between information integration and attitude change. Instructors should be aware that attitude change can only occur because of an integration of new information. To explain this we would like to examine in more detail how Goss describes that values, attitudes and beliefs relate. Attitudes are formed by a combination of values and beliefs. He describes values as "long-enduring feelings,...standards or basic evaluations that are applicable throughout your life. Because they do not change easily, they serve as solid anchors for your decisions in life. These values determine the attitudes and beliefs that you can consistently hold" (Goss, 70).

Beliefs are not evaluative like values. They are your perceptions about the real world and observations that you think are true. Beliefs vary on a true-false continuum and work together with values and attitudes to filter and make sense of incoming messages.

Again, this belief is similar to information-integration theory which postulates that "an attitude is considered to be an accumulation of information about an object, person, situation, or experience, each piece of information having been evaluated" (Littlejohn 147). Thus, attitude change occurs because of new information or changing judgments of truthfulness or value.

It is important in trying to realize the power our intrapersonal communication has in affecting who we are and what we believe to remember that "attitudes are a learned part of one's concept information. They can change as new learnings occur throughout life... Attitude change can occur from any of three sources. First, information can alter the believability (weight) of particular beliefs. Second, information can change the value of a belief. Finally, information can add new beliefs to the attitude structure" (Goss 70). These are important concepts in realizing how our intrapersonal process determines how we integrate information. If we as instructors are able to understand this process we can help our students integrate information that will empower them to improve their attitudes about themselves.

The discussion of information-integration theory and values, attitudes and beliefs states that attitudes are learned as a part of one's concept. This means that depending on our self-concept, we have certain attitudes, values and beliefs. And based on these attitudes, values and beliefs we will be able to integrate certain information more easily than other information. For this reason it is important to look at how our self-concept affects our attitudes and therefore behavior. To do this we will examine self-concept theory.

In a discussion of self-concept theory, LaBenne and Greene start out by looking at the historical perspective. They write, "Self-concept as a determinant of human behavior is not a recent theoretical formulation. The Hindu Scriptures, in the first century B.C., state

> Oh, let the self exalt itself,

Not sink itself below;
Self is the only friend of self,
And self self's only foe.

For self, when it subdues itself
Befriends itself. And so
When it eludes self-conquest, is
Its own and only foe.

So calm, so self-subdued, the self
Has an unshaken base
Through pain and pleasure, cold and heat
Through honor and disgrace."

Feelings and beliefs one has about oneself motivate one's conduct. The antecedent for individual responses is the self-concept. Through examining how theorists throughout the centuries have defined self concepts, LaBenne and Greene discover that "although each of these theorists introduced his preferred jargon, all used the term 'self' to have three meanings: a dynamic process; a system of awareness; or an interrelated process and awareness" (LaBenne 2). Along these lines, Allport articulated, "the self comprises awareness of self and striving activity; it includes bodily sense, self-image, self-esteem and identity as well as thinking and knowing" (LaBenne 3).

Hamachek provides an operational definition for self concept. He says, "self-concept refers to that particular cluster of ideas and attitudes we have about ourselves at any given moment. It is our private synthesis of the feelings and ideas we have developed about our abilities, talents, potentials, and actual behavior" (Hamachek 10). In other words, self-concept is our own mental image of ourselves. It is what we believe ourselves to be, based on our own perceptions and the feedback we get from others.

Self-concept theory is based on the idea that we can predict people's behaviors by recognizing their own interpretation or perception of themselves. People tend to behave in ways

that are consistent with their own self-perceptions. Epstein suggests that in this way, self-concept is a self-theory which we create in order to live our lives (Hamachek 108). The basic function of our self-concept is to formulate and test hypotheses. We do this at a subconscious level. Epstein says that our self-theory has four basic functions: to assimilate the data of experience, to assimilate reflected appraisals into self-perception, to maintain a favorable pleasure/pain balance, and to optimize self esteem (Hamachek 108).

It is in response to and because of our interpersonal communication with people important to us that we develop a view of ourselves, which we strive to maintain. Each of us is immersed in a continual stream of reflected appraisals in which we see images of ourselves mirrored in the input and feedback of people in our social world. In a way, each of us is exposed to ongoing "suggestions" about how we are to behave, think, and dress: "suggestions" about the limits and nature of our abilities, and even "suggestions" about our potential as persons.

LeBenne and Greene's studies aid in our discovery of the behavioral reactions of self-concept by describing how self-concept is developed. They explain that perception and interpersonal communication both play an integral role in the development of a self-picture, as mentioned above with the work of R.D. Laing, Blaine Goss, and C.E. Osgood. LeBenne and Greene attempt to synthesize the above information by explaining the actual development of a self-concept. Their view is that we create an image of ourselves based on our perception of other people's behaviors towards us. They explain, "the self-concept is built or achieved through accumulated social contacts and experiences with other people. People learn their identity, who and what they are, from the kinds of experiences the growing-up process provides" (LaBenne 13). As we interact, we interpret how and what the other interactants think about us. Our interpretations are based on our perceptions of their behaviors.

LaBenne and Greene emphasize that family relations and cultural dynamics are two of the first and thereby important stimuli of self-concept. They stress that parents are intimately involved in sending out messages to a child that reveal to the child his or her self-worth. These are the very seeds of self-concept. Eventually, peers then teachers and mentors become important in a person's life, and their attitudes and behaviors greatly effect that person's self-concept. LaBenne and Greene summarize this belief by stating, "an individual's self-concept is acquired from countless experiences with these significant persons" (LaBenne 14).

Culture, too, plays a role in the development of self-concept and personality. The way a person is raised, what is expected of him or her in terms of grades, attractiveness, attitudinal positions, and future aspirations all contribute to an individual's self-concept. If a child is brought up in a family where the parents are constantly encouraging him or her to become interested in computer science as a career, while at the same time the child finds him or herself more interested in and possessing more of a talent for creative writing, that child may feel as though he or she has "failed" in his parents' definition of success. Therefore, his or her self-concept may be low because of the feeling that his or her talents are not important or worthy.

Another aspect of the self-concept is that it is self-preserving (LaBenne 13) Once a self-concept is formed, the end result is a strongly imbedded idea of self, which encourages maintenance. In other words, self-concept is so personal and the basis by which we view ourselves in the world, that we strive to maintain our self-concept by interpreting others' behaviors in such a way that supports rather than alters the idea of self that has already been established. Kelley states, "the self 'looks out' upon the surrounding scene largely in terms of its own enhancement or defense. It tends to extend in the direction of that which promises to make it better off" (LaBenne 13). In other words, we rely heavily on our self-concept to help us

determine what we can and cannot 'do,' thereby saving ourselves from the embarrassment of trying and failing.

This constancy that we strive to maintain in our perceptions of self lead directly into the examination of two perspectives that have developed within the study of self-concept. These are the self-fulfilling prophesy and positive feedback loop.

The first area we would like to investigate is the idea of a self-fulfilling prophesy. Charles E. Wilcox, former general motors president, said that one of the differences between "good bosses and poor bosses is that good bosses make their workers feel that they have more ability than they think they have so that they consistently do better work than they thought they could" (Zastrow 169). The result of the boss's behavior is a self-fulfilling prophesy, where the workers behave and achieve in the way the boss expects or predicts that they will.

In the classroom, students perform as they are expected to perform (Zastrow 172). The instructor's perception of how well or how poorly a student will perform is picked up by the student. From the information the student picks up from the instructor, the student designs his or her self-expectations to balance with those of the instructor. In other words, the way we behave affects how other people respond and vice-versa. In fact, the expectations we have about people can cause us to interact with them so that they respond just as we thought they would. This justifies our original expectations (predictions) and thus a self-fulfilling prophecy is born. An important thing to remember is that a self-fulfilling prophecy is not the outgrowth of an expectation, rather, it is the outgrowth of the behavior that the expectation produces. Expectations have the potential to become self-fulfilling because teachers (and others) do certain things to communicate their expectations. Nonverbal behaviors also communicate expectations.

For students to live up to an instructor's expectation the instructor must be perceived as being trustworthy, friendly and warm.

The second idea is positive feedback. Shiffler and her colleagues studied 53 children and found that "students who started with high self-concepts not only spent more time working on school-related tasks than low self-concept students but also improved their self-images by getting things done" (Hamachek 271). Shiffler refers to this cycle as the positive feedback loop. It follows then, that students with high self-concepts have greater confidence and higher goals. The more ability students attribute to themselves, the greater their estimation of the probability of success if they work hard. Conversely, students with low self-concepts seem more likely to expect low achievement (if not failure) and, as a result, are less likely to work hard because to do so and fail would be a blow to their already shaky self-esteem.

The instructor's responsibility, in these cases, is to jump into the continuing cycle and -- through positive feedback -- help to alter the self-perceptions of low self-concept students and strengthen self-perceptions of high self-concept students. Though we have mentioned earlier that self-perception perimeters and self-inflicted limits are difficult to alter, it is possible and necessary for improved academic achievement as well as optimal self-concept. Hence, as I, the instructor, give student A positive feedback on a project, test, etc., student A may re-evaluate his or her self-concept regarding attainable goals, change existing expectations and therefore behaviors to greater ones, and eventually fulfill these new self-expectations. This new behavior will result in improved achievement therefore causing improved self-concept. Hamachek says that in this way, "self-concept and achievement are interactive and reciprocal forces, each with the potential to affect the other in positive or negative ways" (Hamachek 272).

Based on this theory of self-concept, we can see how students' performance in school is closely related to how they think they can perform. How they think about their ability is related to other's suggestions (expectations, perceptions) about what they are capable of doing. Current studies support this assertion. B.S. Bloom's investigation found that the critical period for formation of abilities and attitudes pertaining to school achievement are established between the ages of five and nine (Hamachek 266).

This supports LaBenne's view that at an early age, with the interpretations of significant others, in this case the child's teacher, we form an opinion of ourselves which effects our behavior in such a way to carry out that opinion. In fact, Hamachek suggest that "early school success is crucial for a healthy, positive self-concept for at least three basic reasons: subsequent success is not only easier to build onto earlier success, but being successful also seems more possible to the student; early success gives children a sense of competence and accomplishment as well as a precedent with which they can strive for consistency; and early success makes any later school failures more bearable because they are more likely to occur within a consolidated self-system buttressed by achievement and fortified by personal accomplishment" (Hamachek 268).

With these theoretical underpinnings in mind, practical applications can now be offered to help us as instructors concentrate on student self-concept as a way of motivating and increasing student learning. One of the broadest and most over-arching applications that can be offered to instructors to use communication in an effort to increase student self-concept is honesty in their positive and negative reinforcements of student effort. LaBenne remarks, "when children have the security that the teacher accepts them for what they are as worthy beings, there is no need to give false praise or to disguise the facts with sugarcoating. If children know the teacher is 'on their side,' they can profit from the truth about their achievements and constructively build upon

the knowledge of their needs and current weaknesses" (LaBenne 28). In this way, the instructor is providing the students an accurate view of themselves, to be used to set realistic goals for themselves in accomplishing future educational feats.

Accurate appraisals during academic years will encourage a realistic self-concept, which will be predictive of success not only in the educational environment, but in all aspects of life. As evidenced by John Buckner, supervisor for state rehabilitation, a longitudinal study was conducted which followed the achievement patterns of learning disabled students in both main stream classes and special educational courses (Buckner 11/20/94). The study revealed that although students in the special classes consistently achieved better grades than their counterparts in main stream classes, their success after high school graduation was dramatically lower than the success of the students in main stream classes. This provides a case in point for the advice that teachers should give their students a realistic view of their abilities so their expectations of themselves (their self-concept) will be realistic.

Another application available to teachers in their quest to positively affect student self-concept is recognizing students as individuals. LaBenne comments, "teachers must become convinced of the value of rewarding each student for gains that are made in respect to individual desires. There is no reason why students must always be compared to a total class or group. Somewhere in the curriculum and during each day, students must be given opportunities to work to their own expectations, and they should be rewarded when they make significant gains in these endeavors" (LeBenne 29). Recognizing each student as having specific talents and interests will hone their individual abilities, thus improving their self-concept in an applicable way. In addition, students will respond to an instructor who recognizes their individuality in a positive way, increasing their interest and enjoyment for the subject matter in class.

This also will aid the instructor in developing a sense of how to encourage each student in recognition of his or her specific achievements. If the instructor is aware of each student's specific goals, he or she can encourage each of them along those interest lines. One way of putting this idea into practice is to develop student-teacher-parent conferences where the purpose of the meeting is to work as a team to help the student set future goals for him or herself and develop a plan of action to achieve these goals. The student, parent, and teacher will then be aware of what is important to the student, be able to track individual achievement, and assist the student in his or her endeavors. This approach accomplishes two important things. First, it enables the instructor to view the students as individuals. Second, it encourages each student to take responsibility for his or her goals, and therefore become active in his or her own academic achievement. With added interest and responsibility, the student's self-concept will develop positively.

As stated in the PBS production of "Future Quest," there are many tools which instructors may access in an effort to achieve high self-concepts in their students. Evaluation or test-giving stands as one such tool. Multiple choice tests continue to be the most common assessment tool used in schools (Boodoo 50). The video suggests that "paper and pencil" tests are never going to disappear, but they should be recognized as a tool that measures surface knowledge only. Students in the past who have be rated low in this particular type of test but are in reality very intelligent, deal with an artificial sense of incompetence, which negatively effects their self-esteem. If we are to give students an accurate view of their abilities, we need to implement testing techniques that are commiserate with their capabilities. One testing technique that would facilitate this goal is the performance assessment. This technique accesses a variety of evaluative processes, ranging from multiple choice to presentation, including performance-based

assessments. Boodoo states, "specifically, authentic assessments aim to capture a richer array of student knowledge and skill than is possible with multiple choice tests; to depict the processes and strategies by which students produce their work; to align the assessment more directly with the ultimate goals of schooling; and to provide realistic contexts for the production of student work by making the tasks and processes, as well as time and resources, parallel to those in the real world" (Boodoo 51).

A second tool we would like to offer to instructors is re-assessing the classroom environment. Facilitator grouping is a way to promote student-centered education, which encourages students to take an active role in their learning and provides augmented and more accurate feedback through increased interaction with other students. This can be accomplished by a teacher acting as facilitator through the execution of small group activities in the classroom. As a facilitator the teacher acts as a helper instead of evaluator.

Small group activities are better able to provide hands-on experiences which will increase applicable knowledge and student motivation. The video represents students who are not only actively learning their subject matter, but are excited about learning. With hands-on exploration and through collaborative learning, students have more interaction with other students which will allow them to cognitively assess their places among their peers, thereby sharpening their perception of their own self-concept.

Another tool which helps to effectively develop and shape self-concept among students is the use of computers in the classroom. The video production emphasizes the advantages to technologies available to students across the globe. Because of technological advancements, access to information has significantly increased allowing students to pursue individual interests. Through the use of computers and non-lecture activities, students are now able to become the

teachers in the classroom and impart their knowledge to other members of the class as well as to the instructor.

Emphasis on computers enable the students to recognize multiple resources for learning while taking the focus off of the instructor as the only expert. The video examines the use of virtual reality exercises in the classroom as a way to bring intangible subject matter into a more accessible light. In this way, students who are having trouble grasping complex ideas, such as chemistry, have alternate ways to master the subjects and feel better about their abilities because of this newly acquired knowledge. The use of computers as a tool in the classroom can also facilitate more teacher-independent, student to student interaction. It aids communication apprehensive students in expressing their ideas to the class and impresses upon the teacher the student's individual grasp of the material.

As shown by the amount of research and investigation conducted about self-concept, it is obvious this theory is a real and powerful entity in the classroom. With a broader understanding of individual student perceptions, instructors will be better able to structure their curriculum based on the cognitive needs of their students. Perception, intrapersonal and interpersonal communication work together and constantly to form a student's self-concept. With added emphasis on developing positive self-concepts instructors will promote well adjusted, independent and intelligent individuals. Hence, energy spent on student self-concepts will reward not only the student in his or her endeavors in their future but also the community as a whole which relies on the abilities of the young to continue the progress of society.

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